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It rather *gathers them under its wings for protection, whenever they have mental tasks to perform*'. A. Brady, who quotes these words, adds: '"Protection" here has the same meaning as in "protective" custody, or as in ordinary gangster terminology. It means, be protected or arrested; be protected or dissolved' (*The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism*, London, 1937, p. 104). In an exchange of greetings with the new Catholic Bishop of Berlin, Konrad Graf von Preysing, the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs, made clear the basis upon which the Catholic Church was to be tolerated: 'If you, Sir, in an unbiased appreciation of the requirements of the present, *cultivate among your clergy and diocesans loyalty to the new State and its Führer* and respect for its authorities, you may rest assured that the German and Prussian Governments will assume full guarantee for freedom of religious exercises and will show complete understanding for the necessities of the Church.' (Ibid. p. 105).

Religion in U.S.S.R.

Marx saw in religion an 'illusory happiness', the inverse reflection of the 'real misery' of mankind. There are two sources of this misery, first dependence on and weakness before Nature and secondly impotence against oppressive social forces. The stupendous technical advances under capitalism which gives man ever-increasing power over nature has undermined and continues to undermine the former basis of religion. But these very advances, within the framework of capitalism, tend not to abolish, but to strengthen the latter. Poverty in the midst of plenty, insecurity and fear, lead men to seek a secure point of support, to believe in the supernatural.

When the Russian Government inaugurated the Five Year Plans which tremendously increased the power of man over nature, they believed that they were inaugurating the abolition of poverty; the establishment of socialism in Russia would thus undermine both sources of religion. When the Government announced the Second Five Year Plan (1933–37), which was to establish a fully-fledged socialist society, the League of Militant Atheists declared a parallel 'Five Year Plan of Atheism' whose aim was to increase the number of members of the League from 5½ to 15 million in 1937 and to see that 'not a

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77/ single house of prayer shall remain in the territory of the U.S.S.R., and the very concept of God must be banished from the Soviet Union as a survival of the Middle Ages and an instrument for the oppression of the working masses.'

This plan of frontal attack failed miserably. The persecution of religion did not uproot religion at all. Instead of 15 million members of the League in 1937, there were only two million, and even though after much effort the number increased to 3½ million in 1941, it never reached the level of 1932. Prof. N. S. Timasheff, in his book *Religion in Soviet Russia, 1917–1942* (London, 1943), gives many quotations from the Russian press to show the widespread influence of religion: 'During one of the few anti-religious conferences held in recent years, the chairman said that he had been appointed by mistake, that he did not see any progress and that actually the members of the League accomplished nothing. (*Antireligioznik*, 1939, No. 2). In the Petrograd (Leningrad) province, an attempt was made to revive the local organization of the League, but the provincial conference stated three months later that the attempt was futile. At the conference, the secretary of the provincial organization exclaimed bitterly that all the anti-religious work in the province was in his pocket, that is, that it consisted of a few trifling papers. (*Krasnaya Gazeta*, Nov. 15th, 1938; *Antireligioznik*, 1939 No. 1) . . .

'Early in 1940, one could read that "the enemies of anti-religious work had obtained that, in the majority of provinces, there is no anti-religious work at all. Local cells have ceased to exist, lecturers are unavailable". (*Bezbozhnik*, 1939, No. 5, *Antireligioznik*, 1939 No. 11). In September, 1940, the Central Committee of the League convoked a special conference. The report delivered to the conference acknowledged that anti-religious propaganda was dying; the Party and the Young Communist League no longer co-operated. Members of the Conference could not say anything that might mitigate the pessimistic findings of the Central Committee. (*Pravda*, Sept. 22nd, 1940)'. (pp. 99–101).

In 1937, Yaroslavski, Chairman of the League, declared that the number of religious people in Russia was 80 million. In 1940 another leader of the League gave the figure as 90 million, i.e., about half the population. In the same year,

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Antireligioznik declared that half the industrial proletariat believed in God and it was almost impossible to find atheists in the villages.

According to Timasheff: 'In 1938, the official paper of the Militant Atheists League acknowledged that churches in rural districts were well attended and that young people often observed religious holidays. According to the same journal, a large number of children were seen in the churches of Moscow at the Easter service in 1939; and at Christmas, in the Tambov and Voronezh provinces, many children took part during school hours in processions in honour of the Nativity. In the Tambov province, seven tenths of the children were absent from school on Christmas day and celebrated the Feast in their homes. In Moscow and Tiflis, children with candles in their hands prayed in the churches. In Kursk many children were absent from school during Lent, and attended church and received Holy Communior. In the province of Riazan, many received Holy Communion at the Easter mass, and in the Smolensk province, they took an active part in ceremonies linked with Easter'. (Ibid. p. 67).

It is very natural that Yaroslavski met the situation with a despairing cry: 'It is impossible to build up Communism in a society half of which believes in God and the other half fears the devil.' (*Bezbozhnik*, 1939, No. 14).

The defeat of the 'Five Year Plan of Atheism' cannot be explained only, or even mainly, by opposition of the pre-revolutionary generation, as four-fifths of the present population of U.S.S.R. was either born after the October Revolution or were not yet adult when it broke out, so that they were educated in the schools of the new regime; moreover, the Communist Party had limitless means of propaganda, while the priests did not publish a single paper or book.

The 'Five Year Plan of Atheism' failed because the 'real misery' of the people did not abate. The logic of reality was stronger than all the ukazes of the Kremlin and, confronted with this, Stalin made a complete *volte face*, from the persecution of religion to its regimentation.

By 1935 it had already become clear to the Government that the policy of suppression had failed and the turn began then. At Easter, 1935, religious tokens began to be sold in both state